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[p.306] Sierra Tarascans

233 fairly large and they assist materially in fertilizing wheatfields. Wheat farmers will pay about 30 centavos a night to have an average herd bedded on their fields. This is not done for cornlands, as the return is not considered sufficient.

No sheep owner gets his living from the ownership of sheep, but in some cases individuals or even entire families live on their wages as sheepherders. Most sheepherders, however, are boys of from 8 to 20 years and old men and women. Very poor families may start their sons to learn sheep herding as apprentices as early as 6 years of age.

Ordinarily sheepherders return to town only for fiestas or when they need new clothes. Their food is taken to them by a woman in the family. If the entire family work as shepherds, the wife returns to town periodically to [252] cook a supply of tortillas or *gordas* (thick tortilla fried in fat, sometimes made of wheat flour instead of maize).

233 The average wages of sheepherders are 5
465 pesos a month without food, but this evidently varies with the size of the flock. One of the larger owners, with a flock of about 200 sheep, pays 10 centavos a head a month, 1 *fanega* of maize, and permits slaughter of 1 sheep a month. In all cases, shepherds may eat sheep which die, if they think it safe to do so, but the pelt must be washed and dried, and given to the owner.

233 Shepherds watch one another to prevent mis-
[626] behavior, such as secretly selling sheep, or carelessness which would reflect on the profession. Shepherds care for the flocks, protect them from coyotes, and put the ownership marks on the lambs. They are aided by specially trained dogs.

Sheep are herded in the mountains part of the year, and on farm lands after the harvest. [422] Identification marks are made by notching or cutting the ears. Males are not castrated. During the dry season, numerous sheep die of starvation unless their owners have feed (usually wheat straw). Sheep are not dipped and in general receive little care beyond herding. Coyotes are the principal enemies, although a waggish informant listed the enemies of sheep [522] as "First, the coyote; second, the shepherd; and third, the man who buys him for food."

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535 "demons" were dressed in black, wearing a
796 crown of feathers on the back of the head, with a black veil over most of the face. The devils bore such names as "cunning," *astucia*. Some of the dancers were dressed as ranchers. Two small boys represented angels (one, Michael, with a sword), but the majority were dressed in shepherd's costumes. The girls wore loose blouses, fairly long full skirts, straw hats with ribbons, and shoes. The boys wore satin blouses and bloomers, stockings, shoes, and straw hats. Pinks, blues, and whites predominated in the costumes. Both sexes carried shepherd's crooks, decorated with celluloid animals, ribbons, balls of yarn, and feathers.

535 The performance begins with a long *relato*
796 by the devils in which they talk about a journey they are ~~going~~ to make, the curious things they are going to see, etc. Then a *ranchera* and a *ranchero* dance a *jarabe*. The other *rancheros* supervise the two files of children. Then there is a *relato* by the dancers. Then the dancers give their crooks to friends or relatives and dance. The *Europeos* dance about the files of children alone or occasionally with the hermits. The devils and the hermits, on the other hand, constantly engage in byplay, pursuing one another. Occasionally one or two of the devils will capture a hermit and force him to dance along with them. Also, from time to time the hermits use their whips to keep the children from crowding in too much on the dancers.

● [522] The *hermitaños* were special buffoons. One was seen "praying" before the church with his hands together but with both thumbs to his nose. Boys threw bits of stick or pebbles at them; the *hermitaños* would threaten the crowd with their whips or if they identified the offender, would pursue him with their whips—and sometimes used them if the stones had been too big.

The dances are performed first in front of the church before the saints' images, which are brought out of the church for this. Then the dancers eat in the house of the *carguero*, after which they dance. Then they go to various houses and dance. The householders give them fruit, sugarcane, peanuts, or other small gifts. Then they return to the house of the *carguero* to eat once more.

582 587 aged 20. The instance is regarded as exceptional and as undesirable. As a rule, the boy discusses his choice with his parents or with 584 one of his uncles. Although no specific data 604 could be secured on the subject, from the facts that boys at this age seem to be shy with their parents and that the bride is usually taken to the house of an uncle, it seems likely that uncles are consulted on matters of marriage more commonly than are the parents. Some stated there is no preference for maternal or paternal uncles in this connection; others said the girl is taken to a paternal uncle or, lacking an uncle, a paternal aunt.

After a girl is stolen, only on rare occasions 583 does the marriage not follow. Her parents, 522 ● however much opposed they may be, must always give their consent, for it is very difficult for girls to get married if they have been stolen and then returned home. As Agustín put it, "they have to wait for a sucker" in order to get married. A youth marrying such a girl is the butt of teasing by all his age mates, even by persons who do not even know his name. In the one case known of a young man who married a girl who had previously been stolen by someone else, the youth is subjected to so much teasing that he is virtually a recluse, either staying in his house when home or working by himself in the woods.

583 It is generally felt that the municipal authorities should force a youth to marry a girl after he has stolen her. If they do not, the authori- [061] ties are always suspected of receiving bribes to overlook the case. Informants best acquainted with customary viewpoints, though, stated that the municipal authorities are not required to act unless the parents of the groom make the first formal visit to the girl's parents. In this case the municipal authorities are expected to force completion of the marriage. In actual fact the municipal authorities bring some pressure to bear on youths if the girl's parents lodge a complaint.

The following accounts of stealing girls give additional light on the procedures. The first account was written by Agustín Rangel.

When I first met the groom it was about 2 p.m. (on a Sunday) at the corner of Damas Gambe's store. We walked around for a while and when we were coming down the highway he told me he was going to steal a